

Excerpted from the letter from Michael D'Eath (SPAHA President) to SPAHA members in the March 2022 issue of *Harmonica Happenings*:

For the 2022 Convention, as we wrapped up SPAH Week 2021 last August, we had all hoped we'd be past the pandemic by now. Of course, the changing nature of the virus dictated other plans. As in the spring of 2020, when SPAH had to adapt quickly to hold a fully virtual event, the SPAH board has again adapted plans for the Convention, to support a safe, friendly and fun *in-person and online event for 2022*. As we go to press with this issue, we are seeing some "blue sky" on the horizon as the impact of the recent wave recedes in many areas, giving optimism to our plans for our 2022 Convention, the 59th since SPAH was founded.

There are guidelines for you to gather safely with us at the in-person 2022 Convention, to be held August 9-13, 2022 at the Downtown Hyatt Regency, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA. ***Convention and hotel registration opens April 2, 2022***. Full details about Convention registration are included elsewhere on the SPAH website at www.SPAH.org, but here are a few details:

Registration: All registered SPAH Convention attendees must be *Fully Vaccinated* at least two weeks prior to the start of the Convention. This includes members & guests, performers, vendors, and volunteers. *Fully Vaccinated*, as indicated by the US CDC, includes having one or two vaccinations depending on your vaccine, and ideally a booster shot. Your Convention registration will be subject to approval of your proof of *Full Vaccination*, sent to the special SPAH email address when you register. Proof of vaccination must be received no later than July 24th, 2022. The SPAH team will acknowledge each submission by email, indicating approval status.

All Convention registration will be available for advance purchase, and we encourage you to take advantage of early registration. This includes registration for: the hotel; (Wednesday to Saturday) Full Convention; (Tuesday) Blues Blowoff; Saturday including Banquet; and Saturday Banquet Only for guests, as in the past. Advance day tickets for each day (Wed-Fri) will be made available online about 3 months prior to the Convention. At this time, we do not envision offering in-person registration at the Convention.

Safety: All of us recognize that playing a harmonica in this Covid era is a risky endeavor, involving heavy breathing with no mask protection. While all badged attendees will be fully vaccinated, giving each of us comfort as we again meet old & new friends, SPAH volunteers will work with the hotel to limit access to the SPAH Convention space only to those wearing a SPAH Convention badge. In addition, we ask and strongly advise that you maintain *social distance of 6-12 feet*, and when you are in close quarters with your friends, performers, presenters & players, please help everyone by wearing an N95 or equivalent mask covering nose and mouth - except when playing, eating or drinking. This is to provide safety and security to you, your friends, and those playing nearby (who cannot wear a mask!). A surgical mask is also a good, but a less protective alternative.

To reduce contact, the Hyatt Hotel also offers contactless hotel registration and room access when you use the Hyatt app. Please contact the Hyatt and download the Hyatt app for more details.

And, of course, common sense tells us that if you feel unwell, you should stay home, and if you feel unwell during the Convention, please stay in your room!

Online Access: Those unable to attend for any reason can join the proceedings online. SPAH will stream (and record) live broadcasts of most seminars and all evening shows to registered “online” attendees, and provide a “Zoom Lounge” for impromptu gatherings and conversation between online and in-person attendees. Registration for online attendance will be made available in May, about 90 days prior to the start of the Convention. Pricing for online attendance will be published later, and will be comparable to the cost for in-person attendance, without travel and hotel costs, of course.

All in-person, Full Convention registrants will be provided the streaming and recording links so they can watch later, and meet friends in the Zoom Lounge.

We encourage everyone who can attend in person to do so! We all need to be together with our harmonica friends again after 3 years of absence. SPAH needs you to be there in person. Together we will support the performers, presenters and our friends at the Tulsa Hyatt Hotel, where we have been treated so well over the past few years. If it is safe for you, please come.

In addition to these guidelines and policies, for your safety we will be making changes to some events and gathering areas. These include providing more distance between chairs in the performance rooms, ensuring adequate space in the vendor area, limiting use of smaller seminar areas, and restructuring evening jam sessions. The local club has also arranged an innovative, self-guided, Tour Shuttle Program for you to enjoy Tulsa safely while at the Convention. Depending on restrictions or concern for their own safety, some performers may perform “virtually” on a large video screen placed on the stage in the performance areas, so that everyone can enjoy their show. We are, sadly, not planning to hold our local Youth Outreach workshop programs at this time.

Our goal is *to keep everyone safe* so we can celebrate being together again in person as friends and colleagues, while continuing to include those who are unable to be with us in person. We must learn how to convene safely in this new world, so we have relied on the best available scientific and medical advice to make that happen.: Vaccinations, booster shots and masks protect us and our friends from serious illness and symptoms and allow us to enjoy a safe and friendly environment in Tulsa.

We will continue to explore ways to keep everyone safe, while enjoying the first in-person Convention in 3 years. We are sure you will agree these changes will allow you to join us safely as we reconvene in person in 2022. Please stay tuned to our website, www.SPAH.org, and SPAH emails for further details as the situation evolves.